

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



## COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit – Childhood

Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being of Children during COVID-19

Updated Sept. 16, 2020 [Print](#)

### Resources, by Age Group

[Overview](#)

[Early Childhood \(0-5y\)](#)

**[Childhood \(6-12y\)](#)**

[Adolescence \(13-17y\)](#)

[Young Adulthood \(18-24y\)](#)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect children directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many children’s social, emotional, and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Trauma faced at this developmental stage may have long-term consequences across their lifespan. CDC’s [COVID-19 Parental Resource Kit: Ensuring Children and Young People’s Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being](#) can help support parents, caregivers, and other adults serving children and young people in recognizing children and young people’s social, emotional, and mental challenges, and helping to ensure their well-being.

## Challenges

### Change in routines

In addition to other everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, [physical or social distancing](#) is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and to slow its spread. However, having to physically distance from someone you love—like a grandparent, friends, your [worship community](#), or sick family members—can be hard for children. It is important for adults to support children in taking time to check in with friends and family

to see how they are doing.

## Break in continuity of learning

School closures have meant that children stayed at home with parents and caregivers



who had to juggle caretaking, learning supervision, and potential telework responsibilities. Participating in school from home is one way to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Online platforms and learning communities have become essential, as children and their families turn to digital

solutions more than ever to support children's learning. Unfortunately, the immediate need to have virtual school and learning revealed inequity in resources, access, and connectivity across students and communities. It is important for parents to reach out to teachers, school administrators, or school counselors to discuss the challenges your family may face supporting virtual learning. Together, you can discuss options that may be available through the school or county. Also, keep in mind that some students may experience nervous or anxious behaviors due to uncertainty about going back in-person to school. Families and communities can join together to troubleshoot ways to make the transition back to in-person school safe and healthy.

## Break in continuity of health care

Parents may have avoided seeking health care due to stay-at-home orders and may continue to do so because they are afraid of getting sick with COVID-19. This includes important [well-child visits](#), [immunizations](#) and [oral health care](#). Additionally, school closures have impacted many children's ability to receive mental health and speech therapy services. It is important to ensure children receive continuity of health care, including checking on their development at well-child visits, continuing mental health and speech therapies (e.g. via telehealth), and receiving vaccines for illnesses such as measles, influenza, whooping cough, and others—including COVID-19, when it becomes available.



## Missed significant life events

Physical distancing can feel like placing life on hold. The truth is that the clock keeps ticking. Birthdays, graduations, talent shows, vacation plans, births, and funerals are just a sample of the many

significant life events that children may have missed experiencing during COVID-19. Social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and limits to gatherings have affected the ability of friends and family to come together in person to celebrate or grieve in typical ways. [Grief](#) is a normal response to losing someone or something important to you. It is important to help children understand that hosting gatherings during COVID-19 could be dangerous to those who would want to participate. Family and friends can help them find alternate ways to connect and support each other at a distance.

## Lost security and safety



The household income of many families with children was affected during COVID-19 due to job loss and lost wages. Economic insecurity is consistently linked to children's adverse development, academic achievement, and health outcomes. It may affect their ability to consistently access healthy foods, safe

transportation, and housing. Mounting economic stressors can increase children's risk for exposure to violence. Along with stay-at-home orders during COVID-19, some children may have been increasingly exposed to child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence at home, and sexual violence. Children's increased online activity also puts them at [increased risk for online harms](#)  , such as online sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, online risk-taking behavior, and exposure to potentially harmful content. It is important for parents and caregivers to maintain a trustworthy relationship and open communication with children, watching for behavior changes that may signal distress.

## What can you do?

# Recognize and address fear, stress and behavior changes

Children might worry about getting sick with COVID-19, and

about their loved ones getting sick, too. Excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration are some signs of stress in children. Adults can take steps to provide stability and support to [help children cope](#).

## Steps to Help Provide Stability and Support to Children

- Maintain a normal routine
- Talk, listen, and encourage expression
- Give honest and [accurate information](#)
- Teach simple steps to stay healthy
- Be alert for any change in behavior.
- Reassure children about their safety and well-being

## Teach and reinforce everyday preventive actions

There are actions we can take to [prevent getting sick and slow the spread](#) of COVID-19. Be a good role model— if adults wash their hands often, stay at least 6 feet apart from others, and wear their [mask](#) in public spaces to help protect themselves and others, then children are more likely to do the same.

## Help keep children healthy

Schedule well-child and immunizations visits for children. Seek continuity in mental and occupational health care. Help children to [eat healthy](#) and [drink water](#) – instead of sugar sweetened beverages – for [strong teeth](#). Encourage children to play outdoors— it's great for physical and mental health, and can [help children stay healthy](#) and focused.

## Help children stay socially connected

Reach out to friends and family via phone or video chats. Write cards or letters to family members they may not be able to visit. Schools may have tips and guidelines to help [support social and emotional needs of children](#).

## Resources, by Type

Explore different types of resources available to help support children's social, emotional and mental well-being during COVID-19 and beyond.

## Door Hangers

These ready-to-print door hangers can serve as reminders for children, young people, and adults alike to remember some COVID-19 prevention and mitigation practices. Parents and children can also be inspired by these and make their own with paper and crayons or other art supplies. *This resource may be useful for children and young people of all ages.*



Mask

English   
Español 



Mask

English   
Español 



Handwashing

English   
Español 

Social  
Distancing

English   
Español 

## Activity Book

This activity book is intended to provide information to young children and families about how to prevent and cope with COVID-19. *This resource may be useful for children ages 4-7 years.*



English   
Español 

## Conversation Starters

Children and youth can be particularly overwhelmed by [stress](#) related to a traumatic event, like the COVID-19 pandemic. They may show stress through increased [anxiety](#), fear,

**Get immediate help in a crisis and find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health.**

sadness or worry. When children and youth are struggling to cope with stress, they may exhibit unhealthy [eating](#) or [sleeping](#) habits, changes in activity level, [substance use](#) or other risk behaviors, and difficulty with attention and concentration.

Parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults can serve as sources of social [connectedness](#); they can provide stability, support, and open communication. They can also help children and young people express the many different feelings and thoughts on their mind.

Here are some quick ideas for how to get conversations started with children and youth about how they are feeling and what they are struggling with, regarding COVID-19. You don't have to use these exact words – you know best how to speak with your child, adolescent or youth. In addition, how we talk to children and youth varies depending on their age and developmental level.

- COVID-19 is a new disease, which can be confusing. Do you have any questions about it? If I don't know the answer, I can try to find it or maybe we could search for it together.
- People can be angry, sad, or worried when something bad happens. Those feelings can make you feel confused or uncomfortable. Tell me what you have been feeling since the changes started.
- What worries you most about COVID-19?
- Have you been feeling nervous about going back to school because of COVID-19?
- Wearing masks and staying at a distance from others is not something we were used to doing. How do you feel about that?
- When our minds are stuck on bad things, it can be really hard to focus on other things. Have you ever felt this way? What kinds of things does your mind get stuck on?
- Is there anything that you are looking forward to, for when we can connect in-person more safely and return to more normal activities—like a vacation, movie, graduation or playing on a sports team? Tell me about what that might look like!

Some of these conversation starters are used in [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\)](#)   – an approach commonly used among disaster survivors to cope with trauma. PFA can be useful for parents to help children and young people cope by enabling and maintaining environments that promote safety, calmness, connectedness to others, self-efficacy (empowerment), and hopefulness. Remember: It's okay not to have an answer, just being there to listen in a non-judgmental way can be helpful!

Below are some resources to help you learn more about PFA and other tools for parents and caregivers to help children and youth cope:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  - [Helping Children Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)   (Yale Child Study)

Center)

- [Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide](#)  (2nd Edition)
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University
  - [Psychological First Aid: How You Can Support Well-Being in Disaster Victims](#)  
  - [Discussing Coronavirus with Your Children](#)  
  - [Finding the Right Words to Talk with Children and Teens about Coronavirus](#)  

## STEM and Other Activity Ideas

Let's get creative! Here are a few ideas on how to have fun while learning how to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19.

- **DIY masks:** Wearing a mask is a very important step that we can take to stop the spread of COVID-19. Make it a family project to create masks. Be creative and stylish. Here's a [video](#) on how to make your own mask.
- **DIY soap:** Handwashing is an easy, inexpensive, and effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other germs and keep kids and adults healthy. You can help your kids make their own soap! This resource from [PBS Kids for Parents](#)  tells you how.
- **Handwashing song:** Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Teach kids the [five easy steps for handwashing](#)—wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry—and the key times to wash hands, such as after using the bathroom or before eating. Make it fun! Make up your own handwashing song, or pick a song your child likes, and sing it for 20 seconds to help teach the length of time to wash your hands.

## Children Preparedness

CDC has different resources for families to help their children be ready for emergencies.

- [Backpack Emergency Card](#) 
- [Family Communication Plan](#) 
- [Steps to Protect your Child during Emergencies in the School Day](#)
- [Children in Disasters Emergency Kit Checklists](#)
- [Ready Wrigley!](#)

## Other Information Resources

CDC and its federal partners have diverse web resources that can help parents and other caregivers, teachers and other adults support children and young people's social, emotional, mental, and physical well-being:

- [Coping with Stress](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Talking to Children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Keep Children Healthy During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Help Children Learn at Home](#)
- [Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)
- [Handwashing: A Family Activity](#)
- [Routine Vaccination During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Grief and Loss](#)
- [Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers](#)
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)
- [Positive Parenting Tips](#)
- [Children's Mental Health](#)
- [BAM! Body and Mind: Classroom Resources for Teachers](#)
- [VetoViolence](#)
- [StopBullying.gov](#) 
- [Youth.gov: Understanding and Coping with Trauma & Building Resiliency](#) 

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